Counting the Evidence

Compare records of the Triangle factory fire

MWH.P.3.1.A "Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, evaluating features such as author, date, and origin of information."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the date and origin of each source, circle each death toll, and number two details that show where a source got its information. Use your marks to judge what each source can tell you.

Three Records of a Factory Fire

1. On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Waist Company in New York City. Workers sewed shirtwaists, a popular kind of blouse, on the upper floors of a ten-story building. Many could not reach safety before flames and smoke spread. On March 26, *The New York Times* printed a headline that began, "141 Men and Girls Die in Waist Factory Fire." Newspaper staff were reporting while families and officials were still identifying victims. The headline records what a New York newspaper told its readers one day after the fire.

2. The final death toll was 146. A Cornell University online exhibit about the Triangle fire gives that number and brings together older newspaper articles, witness accounts, and official records. The exhibit was assembled long after 1911, though no publication date is given here. Its number differs from the March 26 newspaper headline by five. A reader can trace the headline to a named newspaper and a specific day, but the exhibit's date cannot be checked from this passage. The exhibit also includes materials about campaigns for safer working conditions after the fire.

3. A third record comes from New York's Factory Investigating Commission, created after the fire. Its 1912 report described crowded workrooms and the risks workers faced when exits were hard to reach. Commission members gathered testimony and visited workplaces across the state. Their report came from a government investigation rather than a daily newsroom or a university exhibit. It could offer evidence about working conditions, but its findings did not come from a reporter standing at the fire. The commission urged changes to protect workers, and New York adopted workplace safety laws in the years that followed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Who published the headline, and when? Quote the words that show what the newspaper reported about the death toll.

2. Compare the two death tolls. Cite a passage detail that helps explain why the newspaper's number might differ from the final count.

3. What evidence shows that Cornell's exhibit draws on earlier sources? Name one detail about the exhibit that you cannot check from this passage.

4. Why might the commission's report be more useful than the newspaper headline for studying workplace conditions? Cite evidence about the report's origin and how the commission gathered information.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum is planning a panel on how people responded to workplace dangers after the fire. In one paragraph, recommend two of the sources in the passage, quote one relevant detail about each, and explain how each source's origin or date helps or limits its use.

ANSWER KEY

Counting the Evidence

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.P.3.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the date and origin of each source, circle each death toll, and number two details that show where a source got its information. Use your marks to judge what each source can tell you. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Who published the headline, and when? Quote the words that show what the newspaper reported about the death toll.	***The New York Times* published it on March 26, 1911. Its headline began, "141 Men and Girls Die in Waist Factory Fire."**
2	Compare the two death tolls. Cite a passage detail that helps explain why the newspaper's number might differ from the final count.	**The newspaper reported 141, while the final toll was 146. Newspaper staff were reporting while families and officials were still identifying victims.**
3	What evidence shows that Cornell's exhibit draws on earlier sources? Name one detail about the exhibit that you cannot check from this passage.	**It brings together "older newspaper articles, witness accounts, and official records." Its publication date cannot be checked from this passage.**
4	Why might the commission's report be more useful than the newspaper headline for studying workplace conditions? Cite evidence about the report's origin and how the commission gathered information.	**The 1912 report came from a government investigation. Commission members "gathered testimony and visited workplaces across the state," giving them evidence about conditions beyond a headline.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would use the commission's report and Cornell University's exhibit. The commission "urged changes to protect workers," showing a government response soon after the fire. Its 1912 date makes it useful for studying early action, though it may emphasize official views. Cornell's exhibit includes "materials about campaigns for safer working conditions," adding responses beyond government. Because the passage gives no date for the exhibit, I cannot tell when its account was assembled.

Accept other supported judgments about a source's usefulness or limits. Look for accurate quotations and a clear link between each source's origin or date and the student's claim.